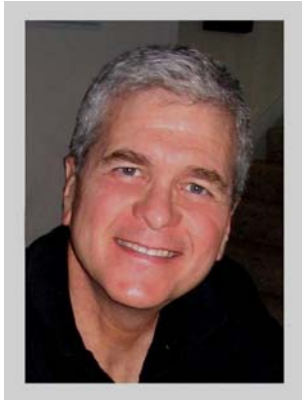


Employees Often Depart Because They're Pushed



By Leigh Branham

(Adapted from guest column that originally appeared in **THE KANSAS CITY STAR.**)

Recent reports indicate that 40-60 percent of US. workers are ready to jump ship when the economy and job market improve. If you are an employer whose success hinges on finding and keeping good workers, these reports may have grabbed your attention. If not, they should have.

The economic outlook dictates that all employers who aspire to become "employers of choice" will need to redouble their efforts. This means understanding what attracts employees to your company, what makes them want to stay, and what pushes them out the door.

More than 80 percent of managers believe that employees leave mainly for better pay and opportunities elsewhere. Of course, as the job market improves, the "pull factor" comes more into play, and the fact is, most departing employees do get more pay and a better opportunity.

What intrigues me is how little thought and attention is paid to the "push factors" - the unacceptable working conditions that push people to the door so that when a better offer comes along, it is easier to take that last step across the threshold. The reality-revealing question we should be asking is not "Why would you leave?" It's not even "Why did you leave?" Rather, we should be asking: "Why did you start thinking of leaving?"

Distinguished business professor Thomas Lee at the University of Washington, who has studied employee turnover most of his career, has developed what he calls "the unfolding model of turnover."

The main idea is that the decision to leave an organization unfolds gradually, beginning (63 percent of the time) with a shocking realization or disillusionment by the employee —as when a new hire gets no coaching and feedback in the first 30 days or realizes the job is somehow different than promised. Employees may start weighing the pros and cons of leaving and think about it for weeks, months or years before an offer finally "pulls" them out, during which time they are "disengaged"

